THE BATTLE OF SHILOH.

The Confederate forces under Generals A. S. Johnston and G. T. Beauregard were united about the last of March 1862, taking the name of the "Army of the Mississippi" commanded by Gen. A. S. Johnston.


This army commanded by Gen. A. S. Johnston, with Gen. G. T. Beauregard next in command, was concentrated at Corinth for the purpose of attacking the Federal Army under Gen. Grant, encamped between Shiloh Church on Pittsburg Landing on the Tennessee River about 15 or 20 miles from Corinth. This army, reinforced by Gen. Buell's army on the afternoon of the first day's right, numbered 72,000 men of all arms.

Gen. Grant's army, including Gen. Leu Wallace's division of 8000 men nearly, numbered 51,000 men. Gen. Grant had with him Gen. Sherman, probably the bravest man the Union Army produced, and many seasoned troops flushed with their victories at Forts Henry and Donelson, and in addition to this his base at Pittsburg Landing was fortified by gun boats.

Our army was not well disciplined, many were raw troops, and rations were very scarce the day before and the first day of the battle. I remember that all I had to eat on Saturday were some sardines and crackers, and I think I had not as much on Sunday, until we got into the camp vacated by the Federals about dark: then, we had a feast of good things. The plan of battle was to attack Grant on Saturday morning, 5th of April, but Gen. Polk's corps was slow in getting from Corinth to the battlefield, and other commands were slow in getting into position, so that we were not ready to make the attack until Sunday morning. Before sunrise on that beautiful Sunday morning in April, General Johnston, Beauregard, Polk, Bragg and Hardee—Breckinbridge was not present, as
his corps was held in reserve—held a conference just in rear of our line of battle. Everything was ready and the order of battle was that Hardee's corps should be the 1st line, Gen. Bragg's the 2nd and Gen. Polk's the 3rd. Before the order to advance was given Gen. Johnston directed Hardee to ride forward and inspect his line. He soon returned, walking with the strap of his cap hanging that had been cut by a bullet of the opposing skirmishers and reported that his skirmishers were engaged. Then Gen. Johnston gave the order for the three Corps to advance. After which, this group of officers and their staffs separated (some to meet no more on earth) to go to their respective commands. Two of this group were killed that day, one was Gen. Johnston and the other a young officer of the Arkansas brigade, whose name, I've forgotten. This young man had made a reconnaissance and suddenly came upon several Federal officers; he and they exchanged shots without his being wounded. On his return to the group he reported what he had seen and done to Gen. Johnston, who rebuked him for his rashness. This angered the young officer, who (not within hearing of the General) used some very intemperate language about Gen. Johnston, and then rode off not long afterwards to his death.

The attack proved to be a surprise to the main body of Grant's army, some troops in camp tents still standing, others pursuing their usual camp duties. Grant was some distance in rear of his command, Sherman did his best to rally his men, who were thrown in confusion, because of being surprised, but could not do much to resist the impetuous charge of our troops. All three corps did splendid work and would have driven Grant's army unto the Tennessee river, or captured it before Buell could join Grant, if the Generals, instead of pressing forward detachments of their commands, had kept their corps well in hand, and had thus presented a solid unbroken front to the retreating enemy.

Breckinridge's reserve corps was called on repeatedly during the first day's fight to support parts of the three corps, whereas if these corps had been kept together, with Breckinridge's 4th Corps immediately behind them, there would have been no "hornet's nest" as it was called to hold Bragg's corps in check several hours. But as it was, with this and other difficulties confronting the army of the Mississippi, Gen. Johnston swept every-
thing before him, and after his death at 2:30 p.m. Gen. Beauregard, now in command of our army, followed up the success thus achieved to greater results, until Grant's army was in full retreat towards Pittsburg Landing. Now as Buell was crossing the river with his army of fresh men, and our men were worn out by Friday's and Saturday's marching, by head fighting all day, Sunday with little to eat for several days and as dusk was approaching Gen. Beauregard ordered a halt, and withdrawal of our troops back to the encampments, the enemy had left, where our weary, jaded and hungry troops found more than enough of the nicest kind of food to eat. After our hunger was appeased we lay down to sleep, but got very little sleep that night on account of one of the most terrible storms of thunder, lightning and rain that I ever experienced. The next morning, Monday, our army was up early awaiting the attack of Gen. Grant's army, reinforced by Gen. Buell's army. Gen. Beauregard did all that could be done to repel the attack of such overwhelming numbers. Our troops fought like (what they were) brave men, long and well. They resisted stubbornly every inch of ground, but about 2 P.M., Gen. Beauregard was compelled to give the order to retreat to Corinth, our base, and former camping ground, which we reached that night, wet with the rain of Sunday night and Monday, and thoroughly worn out, and I must add, quite dejected.

The Battle of Shiloh has been called by a writer "one of the greatest and bloodiest of the war," and was so considered by Gen. Sherman, I believe, in his Memoirs. Our losses in that Battle will rank it among the bloodiest of any war. The loss in killed, wounded and missing in war averages from five to twenty-five per cent. Our loss at Gettysburg (the army of northern Virginia numbering 65,000 men), was 16,000, or about 25 per cent. Our loss at Shiloh, (the army of the Mississippi numbering 40,000 men) was 10,699, or about 24 per cent. "The loss of the British at Waterloo was 16 per cent, of the Austrians at Magenta 8 per cent, and of the Prussians at Sedan 5 per cent." The loss of the Federal Army at Shiloh, numbering 72,000 men, was 12,190, or about 13 per cent. The capture of a whole brigade and commander Brig. Gen. Prentiss (Fédérals) by our troops on Sunday afternoon was a most remarkable incident, and Gen. Prentiss in his report thus alludes to it: "I determined to assail the enemy, which had passed between me and the river, charging upon him with my entire force, I found him advancing in mass, completely encircling my command, and nothing was left but to harass him and re-
tard his progress so long as might be possible. This, I did until 5:30 P. M., when finding that further resistance must result in the slaughter of every man in the command I had to yield the fight. The enemy succeeded in capturing myself and twenty-two hundred (2200) rank and file, many of them wounded."

Written by Major Giles B. Cooke.

During the latter part of the War he was on Gen. Lee's Staff. After the War, he studied for the ministry and has been a useful minister ever since. He has been living at Matthews Court House, Va. He has moved to Portsmouth, Va. and is in charge of a Church there.

He sent this copy to our chapter.